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Israeli Newspapers Say American Was Recruited

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JERUSALEM, Nov. 26 — Two leading Israeli newspapers today named Rafi Eitan, who was an adviser on terrorism to Prime Minister Menachem Begin, as the man who is purported to have recruited an American to spy for Israel.

The American, Jonathan Jay Pollard, a civilian Navy employee, was arrested on espionage charges Thursday outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

The two newspapers, Haaretz and Yediot Ahronot, reported that an article in the Tuesday issue of The Washington Post was the source of their information. However, Mr. Eitan's name was not mentioned in The Post account. Referring to an Israeli who was purported to have been involved in the case, The Post described him only as an official who once worked for Mr. Begin on security matters.

Israeli officials said the entire matter was still under investigation and refused to comment on the newspaper reports. Attempts to reach Mr. Eitan for comment proved fruitless.

Investigation in Israel

In a separate development, Israeli Government sources said Mr. Pollard's main contact at their embassy in Washington was an Israeli official responsible for collecting sensitive scientific data for military and other uses.

A Federal law-enforcement official said in Washington today that he was not aware that Mr. Pollard had a contact within the Israeli Embassy. But he said that officials believed that a journalist based in the United States had served as an intelligence contact for Mr. Pollard.

"The only contact we were aware of was a journalist who was sympathetic" to Israel, the official said. "We're not saying he's Israeli. I don't know whether he's a native. He's close to the

Israelis."

The newspaper Yediot Ahronot said today that it appeared the Israeli investigation was focusing "on persons and bodies outside the main branches of the Israeli intelligence community." The paper added that the chief of the Mossad, the Israeli equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency, had been taken by surprise by the Pollard affair.

Citing The Washington Post, Haaretz and Yediot Ahronot both stated this morning that Mr. Eitan was the key figure who recruited Mr. Pollard while the American was on a visit to Israel.

Yediot, continuing to cite The Post account, also said that Mr. Eitan was working for Mr. Begin at the time and apparently had the permission of the "political level" in making contact with Mr. Pollard. The Israeli paper said Mr. Eitan visited the United States on several occasions and was in regular contact with Mr. Pollard.

No Name Mentioned

However, The Washington Post article cited by Yediot and Haaretz as their source never mentioned Mr. Eitan by name. The article reported that "unofficial Israeli sources" had named the Israeli intermediary in the case, but added, "The Washington Post has decided not to use the man's name, since no reliable source has tied him directly to Pollard."

Rumors have been circulating for several days in Israel that a former senior adviser to Mr. Begin was the key Israeli figure in the affair. Several Israeli newspapers have tried to print his name but were prevented from doing so by military censorship.

According to the rules of Israeli censorship, if information is printed or broadcast by foreign news organizations, it can be quoted by the Israeli news media, even if they were under censorship at home.

The Israeli editors apparently decided they were safe in printing the

name and citing The Post, even though, because of the seven-hour time difference, they were publishing their Tuesday issue before The Post was.

Mr. Eitan has a background in Israeli intelligence, according to political sources. They said he was appointed as Mr. Begin's adviser on terrorism, partly on the advice of Ariel Sharon, then the Israeli defense minister.

The adviser on terrorism handles virtually all the key intelligence matters relating to terrorism. He is sometimes called upon by the Prime Minister to deal with other assignments, political sources said.

Shimon Peres, when he became Prime Minister in September 1984, replaced Mr. Eitan as the adviser on terrorism. It was not clear what Mr. Eitan has been doing since then, although Government sources said he was still on the state payroll.

Thus far, no evidence has emerged publicly to link Mr. Eitan or any other senior Israeli official past or present with the Pollard affair.